

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 19, 2007*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote Nos. 252, 414, and 454.

I take my voting responsibility seriously, and if I had been present, I would have voted "yea" on each.

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**HONORING THE MEMORY OF MR.  
PORTER EDWARD TAIT, JR.**
**HON. JO BONNER**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 19, 2007*

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, the city of Camden and indeed the entire State of Alabama recently lost a dear friend, and I rise today to honor him and pay tribute to his memory.

Mr. Porter Tait, Jr., a devoted family man, was dedicated to the continued growth and prosperity of Camden. A U.S. Army veteran, he served in World War II and the Korean war and worked for International Paper for over 20 years.

A life long resident of Wilcox County, Porter was a member of Camden Baptist Church and a member of the BYKOTA Sunday School Class. A master Mason, Porter was a member of the Dale Lodge #25 for 55 years. He was also a Shriner, a member of the Alcazar Temple in Montgomery, the American Legion Post 84, and the Selma Elks Lodge.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering a dedicated community leader and friend to many throughout Alabama. Mr. Porter Tait, Jr. will be deeply missed by his family—his wife of 51 years, Lula Lee Ray Tait; his two sons, Porter Edward Tait III, and Timothy Ray Tait; his one daughter, Dr. Margaret Tait Moore; his four sisters, Martha Jones, Pauline T. D'Alessio, Laura Carr, and Doris Locklin; and his six grandchildren—as well as the countless friends he leaves behind. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all at this difficult time.

In addition to my statement, I ask that an accompanying article from the Wilcox Progressive Era, written by its longtime publisher, M. Hollis Curl, be included in this tribute to Porter Tait. May he rest in peace.

Family and friends gathered yesterday at the Camden Baptist Church to eulogize Porter Tait before driving on down to Reaves Chapel Baptist Church for Masonic services at graveside.

Porter died late Sunday afternoon at J. Paul Jones Hospital where he had been a patient for several days. Members of his loving family were at his bedside; anguished at his leaving them but relieved that his suffering was over.

I first came to know Porter Tait in the late 1960's; just a few years before a serious stroke left him substantially disabled. His two sons, Ted and Tim were classmates of my son, Mark, and daughter, Julie. His daughter Meg came along a bit later and we all marveled at her superior intellect as she breezed through college at Auburn before graduating from medical school in Bir-

mingham. She—along with her brothers—was a source of great pride to Porter and his wife, Lula Lee.

Actually, there was a "family" bond of sorts between Porter and me. We shared a grandson, Tyler Tait, who was born to Julie and Ted. They eventually went their separate ways but have remained friends over the years.

But I digress. This is not about family, nor friends, nor relationships. It is about a man who was loved and respected by all who knew him.

The stroke which left Porter unable to work forced him to get about on unsteady legs and, as the years went by, to limit his speech somewhat. But he never gave up.

For quite a few years Porter made his usual rounds about Camden in a little VW bug which he eventually abandoned in favor of a small pickup truck. Those two vehicles were seen almost daily at the business places of friends he had known all his life.

One of his favorite activities was helping as best he could with barbecue cooking at the drive-in which his son Ted sold to Travis Durant who sold it to Larry Gaston. Porter knew just what it took to turn out mouthwatering barbecue spiced with his own brand of tale-telling around the fire.

Most younger folks in Camden probably didn't know Porter Tait. His disability had kept him close to home on McWilliams Avenue just across from the hospital. That is unfortunate because Porter Tait was the sort of fellow who could impart great life lessons drawn from his 79 years of life.

It is also important to note that Porter Tait was a devout, born-again Christian who read his Bible every day. He knew the message Jesus gave us and he incorporated those beliefs into his life and his relationships with those who visited him as he grew increasingly home-bound.

Come to think of it, when it came to living a Christ-like life I never saw anything in Porter's life to diminish my respect for him.

He played out his life with the hand that was dealt him and I never heard him say an unkind word about anybody.

He was a good man.

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**HONORING OUR COMMITMENTS TO  
THE COAST GUARD**
**HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 19, 2007*

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my support to the U.S. Coast Guard and our efforts to modernize their fleet. The brave men and women of our Coast Guard deserve the resources they need in order to carry out their mission. We need to support funding for the many programs aimed at strengthening our drug interdiction and refugee recovery efforts, much of which can be accomplished by ensuring that the necessary funds are dedicated towards the Deepwater acquisition program. Nearly a decade ago, the Coast Guard initiated a multi-billion dollar effort to modernize its aging assets. However, due to serious gaps in funding and a lack of program accountability this effort has fallen short of its goals thus far. Many problems have been raised, however reforms have been made, and yet much more needs to be done. Amidst such controversy, let us not forget the crucial role the Coast Guard plays in ensuring both public safety and national security.

The Coast Guard has a critical role in our struggle to eliminate drug trafficking that is fre-

quently used to finance global terrorist organizations in their war against freedom and democracy. Earlier this year our Coast Guard, working in conjunction with the Drug Enforcement Administration, seized in one raid nearly 20 tons of cocaine with an estimated value of \$300 million. This was a tremendous victory in our War on Drugs and our battle against terrorists and their financiers, especially considering the deep water cutter used in the seizure was an antiquated, 40-year-old cutter. However, victories of this sort will become increasingly difficult if we are not able to modernize our fleet and aircraft to keep up with the technology used by terrorists and drug lords. We must support increased funding to ensure our Coast Guard has the resources needed to efficiently and effectively perform their mission.

As noted by the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Committee report: the Coast Guard is currently operating at a 25-percent deficit of its patrol boat mission hours. This level of insufficient mission hours will be further magnified as our Navy will be reducing the 179-foot patrol boats currently being used by the Coast Guard, from five to three.

With a reduction of two patrol boats, the gap of mission hours will be increased by another 5,000 hours. With a discrepancy this large, we are leaving our waters dangerously unpatrolled; thereby creating an open playground for narcotraffickers. This is not an acceptable option for the rest of the country, but this is especially disturbing to the Citizens of South Florida, who rely on the Coast Guard to protect and their economic viability and security. I commend the men and women who serve in our Coast Guard for their diligence and dedication to continue to secure and protect our ports, inland waterways, coasts, and international waters. In my congressional district, I am privileged to have two Coast Guard Sectors that patrol the waters of South Florida: Sector Key West and Sector Miami. I know the good work these individuals are involved in and I deeply appreciate the dangerous work they do to maintain the safety and security on our waterways. The efforts of these brave men and women have saved countless lives and greatly enhanced our national security. We cannot let them do their jobs without the tools necessary to keep them safe as they work to keep our country safe.

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**HONORING THE MORRIS PLAINS  
FIRE DEPARTMENT**
**HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 19, 2007*

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the Morris Plains Fire Department, in the Borough of Morris Plains, Morris County, New Jersey, a patriotic community that I am proud to represent! On June 23, 2007 the good citizens of Morris Plains will celebrate the Fire Department's 100th anniversary with a parade, picnic, awards ceremony, and fireworks.

In the early 20th century, Morris Plains was a small community within Hanover Township and was supported by the Hanover Township and Morristown Fire Departments. However, in 1906, the Wise Hotel in Morris Plains was completely destroyed before either fire company could respond to the call. The incident

brought to the town's attention the need for local fire protection, and on April 25, 1907, in the meeting hall of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics on Franklin Place, the Morris Plains Fire Association was incorporated.

The Fire Department's first purchase was an American LaFrance horse drawn hook and ladder that was financed from donations from the local citizens. Another citizen pitched in by donating his own horse and wagon to be converted by the firemen for use as a hose and wagon.

As the community grew, in 1926, it was decided that Morris Plains would break away from Hanover Township to become what is known today as the Borough of Morris Plains, also known as the "community of caring." In addition, the new Borough government assumed the position of maintaining and replacing fire apparatus. The Morris Plains Fire Association became the Morris Plains Fire Department.

In August of 1940, a fire in the roof of the firehouse damaged the building beyond repair. The Borough Council had been conducting their business in the firehouse meeting room. The Fire Department and Council built a shared facility that today encompasses quarters for the Fire Department, Police and Borough offices.

Today, the Morris Plains Fire Department is led by Chief Michael Geary who successfully commands an all volunteer fire department of about 80 members serving close to 5,250 residents in about a two and a half square mile area.

Madam Speaker, I urge you and my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Morris Plains Fire Department and all their firefighters, past and present, on celebrating 100 years of protecting one of New Jersey's finest municipalities!

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 19, 2007*

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, on Monday June 18, 2007, I was tending to some family matters and thus missed rollcall votes 499, 500, 501. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on all votes.

#### COMMEMORATING THE RETIREMENT OF RUTH ONITA SPAKE

#### HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 19, 2007*

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable person, Ruth Onita Spake, who has dedicated her career and life to public service as Chief Financial Officer for the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency. She is retiring from the County of Santa Clara on July 20, 2007 after thirty-seven years of exemplary work.

Ruth Onita Spake was born on April 3, 1945 in Tallahassee, Florida. Academic excellence was a priority for her; she received an Associ-

ates Degree from Napa Junior College and obtained her Bachelors Degree and a Standardized Secondary Teachers Credential from the University of California, Davis. Before joining the Social Services Agency, she worked as a substitute teacher and as a cost account clerk for an international newspaper.

Ruth's career with Santa Clara County began in 1970 as a Food Stamp Eligibility Worker, where she interviewed applicants on an individual basis to help determine their eligibility to receive county resources. She quickly rose through the ranks and became a Supervisor in just four years. Soon after that, she was appointed as the Program Coordinator, responsible for organizing and directing the entire food stamp program.

After receiving a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the University of California, Riverside, Ruth continued to contribute to Santa Clara County. In 1980, she joined the County Executive's Office of Management and Budget where she stayed for five years. However, she could not resist the call to work towards improving the welfare of Santa Clara residents. By 1985, she had returned to the Social Services Agency to manage the agency's budget.

Ruth progressed quickly through the agency, and her efforts were admired by all those who had the pleasure of working with her. By the early 1990's, Ruth was managing the \$500 million dollar budget of Social Services in conjunction with Central Services and Information Systems. Her role as the Chief Financial Officer afforded her the opportunity to initiate modernization for the agency. She planned and implemented a multi-building renovation project for the agency, revamping the physical infrastructure to supply superior services for the residents.

In addition, Ruth co-chaired the California Welfare Directors and California Department of Social Services Task Force, an association that significantly refurbished the statewide county reimbursement process. This development benefited not only the inhabitants of Santa Clara County but also positively affected those of all fifty-eight counties in California.

Ruth's main interest is her desire to travel. Being of French descent, she is strongly attracted to the French culture and can be classified as a true Francophile. After her retirement, she will undoubtedly dedicate her time to exploring foreign countries and expressing her love for anything French.

Ruth's outstanding achievements at the Social Services Agency were numerous, and their impact on Santa Clara County is immeasurable. Her ability to understand and employ the funding behind the provisions of public social services is astonishing. Where others might have merely done what was required of them, Ruth has gone above and beyond what her job description entailed to provide the Social Services Agency with more efficient methods of serving the residents of Santa Clara County.

I offer my congratulations to Ruth Onita Spake on her thirty-seven distinguished years of exceptional service to the Santa Clara community. Her dedication and sacrifice is the very definition of public service, and her tireless efforts to build and sustain the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency will forever be appreciated and remembered by all.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. MIKE ROSS

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 19, 2007*

Mr. ROSS. Madam Speaker, on Monday, June 18, 2007, I was not present for votes due to mechanical problems on my flight to Washington, DC caused by Northwest Airlines.

Had I been present for rollcall 499, H.R. 2563—To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 309 East Linn Street in Marshalltown, Iowa, as the "Major Scott Nisely Post Office", I would have voted "yes."

#### JUNETEENTH DAY—ACKNOWLEDGMENT

#### HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 19, 2007*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the historical importance of June 19. This is the day that signifies the initial abolishment of slavery in the United States.

As you are aware, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862 to declare freedom of all slaves in the territories of the Confederate States of America by January 1, 1863. Despite the proclamation being issued in September of 1862, most people did not know about it because the infrastructure of communication at that time was no where near as sophisticated as it is today and slave owners undoubtedly did not want their slaves to know about their freedom. On June 19, 1865, troops descended on Galveston Island in Texas to impose the proclamation. Since then, June 19th has been celebrated and recognized as the day slaves were freed. The name Juneteenth is a compilation of portions of the word June and the 19th day of the month. June 19th is an official holiday in Texas and is recognized in some States including New York as an official holiday.

It is extremely important that we not forget the institution of slavery. It represents a very dark part of our history in the United States. The cost and sacrifices of people who were enslaved are immeasurable. For those who lived long enough to be set free, their strength is awesomely inspiring to me and nothing short of a miracle. When I reflect on slavery and the suffering endured, I am humbled and feel grateful for the steadfastness, courage, and faith of my ancestors. I would not be where I am today, if it were not for them.

On this day, I urge my colleagues and all Americans to remember the injustice of slavery and celebrate the abolishment of it. So much progress has been made in our great country towards the rights the forefathers and other great leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned for all Americans. We shall continue to advance civil and human rights, embrace diversity, and treat each other with dignity and respect.